

Turkey Hails Russian Bid to Resume Dialogue over Syria Crisis in 2015

ANKARA - Turkey welcomed consultations between Russia and Syrian opposition in Moscow, which aims to resume talks in 2015 to end the long-running conflict, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Monday.

"All relevant parties should be included in the process. No country should be isolated. Russia and Iran should be part of the efforts," Cavusoglu said at a joint press conference with visiting

Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Yerlan Idrisov. He stressed that Turkey recognized Syrian National Coalition (SNC) as the representative of the Syrian opposition.

The Turkish foreign minister's remarks came over a Russian initiative to hold a dialogue between representatives of the Syrian government and opposition parties to figure out a political solution to the country's long-running conflict. Official Russian me-

dia said that a four-day meeting is scheduled to be held between representatives of the Syrian government and opposition parties in Moscow by the end of next January. Earlier in December, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told ITAR TASS news agency that the opportunities to resume dialogue on the Syrian crisis are being improved, expressing optimism to launch the dialogue between the Syrians. (Xinhua)



Kurdish Fighters Launched Over 330 Military Operations against ISIL

TEHRAN - The Kurdish fighters have launched hundreds of military operations against the Takfiri terrorists in the Hasaka province in the Northeastern parts of Syria during 2014, a report said on Monday.

The People's Protection Units (YPG) conducted 337 military operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Takfiri terrorists and they have also contributed to 414 other anti-ISIL battles, the YPG report said.

It noted that the Kurd-

ish fighters have killed around 5,000 ISIL terrorists during the said operations. They have also destroyed 20 military vehicles, 60 RPGs and 48 machine guns of the ISIL terrorists during the operations, it added.

The ISIL Takfiri terrorists currently control parts of Syria and Iraq.

They have threatened all communities, including Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, Christians, Ezadi Kurds and others, as they continue their atrocities in Iraq.

Senior Syrian and Iraqi

officials have blamed Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and some Persian Gulf Arab states for the growing terrorism in their countries. The ISIL has links with Saudi intelligence and is believed to be indirectly supported by the Israeli regime. (FNA)



S.Korea, Japan, U.S. Intelligence Sharing Pact Takes Effect

SEOUL - The trilateral pact to share military intelligence between South Korea, Japan and the United States took effect on Monday, Seoul's defense ministry said.

According to a copy of the agreement, the three countries will share intelligence on nuclear and missile "threats" posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in any form such as "oral, visual, electronic, magnetic or documentary form."

South Korea and Japan will exchange intelligence only through the United States after consent from both nations. Under the

memorandum of understanding (MOU), Seoul and Tokyo will not share intelligence directly.

The MOU is based on intelligence-sharing agreements inked in 1987 between Seoul and Washington and in 2007 between Tokyo and Washington.

South Korean Defense Minister Han Min-koo told lawmakers that the signing of the MOU was conducted on Dec. 23 by the United States and on Dec. 26 by South Korea and Japan respectively, saying it was brought into effect from Monday as it took time to complete all necessary proce-

dures. South Korean defense ministry said last Friday that the three countries would sign the pact Monday. Lawmakers denounced the ministry for the belated report on it to the parliament though it needs no parliamentary approval.

The agreement will not have legally binding effects under international law or domestic laws and regulations, the copy of the agreement stated.

The agreement will remain operative until a participant gives an advance notice to the other participants that it no longer participates in the arrangement. (Xinhua)



Suspicious Objects Spotted As Search for Missing Airasia Plane Expands

JAKARTA/PANGKALPINANG, Indonesia - Suspicious objects were detected on Monday in the Java Sea where an AirAsia plane disappeared as the search operation expanded with more countries joining the sea and aerial hunt.

Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla told a press conference at Surabaya airport that he received reports that an Australian Orion surveillance plane had spotted suspicious objects near the Nangka Island, 1,120 km from the location where the jetliner lost contact.

However, the vice president said he could not confirm whether the objects were parts of the missing QZ8501 flight.

They "have not been clarified," he said, adding that rescuers and searchers were verifying the reports.

Meanwhile, Air Force spokesman Hadi Tjahjanto said an Indonesian helicopter had spotted an oil slick some 100 nautical miles (185 km) off the east coast of the Belitung Island.

"We haven't been able to confirm, however, whether it was the fuel of the AirAsia aircraft," he said.



Earlier, an Indonesian official told the media that the missing jet with 162 people on board was believed to have sunken into the bottom of the sea.

"Because the coordinate that was given to us and the evolution from the calculation point of the flight track is at sea, our early conjecture is that the plane is at the bottom of the sea," said Bambang Sulisty, head of the National Search and Rescue Agency (Basarnas).

Should the projection be true, Indonesia needed to cooperate with other countries to bring the wreckage to the surface, he added.

The Airbus A320-200 disappeared Sunday en route from Surabaya in Indonesia's East Java to Singapore after the pilot requested a change of

flight plan due to stormy weather.

The flight lost contact with the ground after the air traffic control consented to the pilot's request to change flight route but it did not approve the request to raise its height of flight to 34,000 feet (10,303 meters).

The aircraft, which sent no distress signal, must have run out its fuel if it kept flying, said Djoko Murjatmodjo, director general of air transport of the Indonesian Transport Ministry.

Aircraft and ships from Singapore, Malaysia and Australia have been deployed to assist Indonesia's search efforts, which is centered on waters around the Belitung Island in the Java Sea across from Kalimantan on the Borneo Island. (Xinhua)

Syria To Reopen Its Embassy In Kuwait

DAMASCUS - Three Syrian diplomats left Damascus for Kuwait Monday where they will reopen their country's embassy in the Persian Gulf nation, a Syrian official said.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, told The Associated Press that the diplomats include a charge d'affaires.

Kuwait, where tens of thousands of Syrians live, has been a strong supporter of the opposition trying to remove President Bashar Assad from power.

Khaled al-Jarallah, an undersecretary at Kuwait's Foreign Ministry, was quoted in the local Kuwaiti news website Al-Jarida earlier this month as saying that the Syrian diplomats left Kuwait City voluntarily in March and are returning voluntarily to resume consular services for Syrian residents there.

Al-Jarallah was quoted as saying that this does not mean a normalization of relations with Syria and that Kuwaiti diplomats would not be returning to Damascus, where the embassy closed after Syria's crisis began in March 2011. (AP)

Suicide Attack on Funeral Kills 15: Iraq



BAGHDAD - A suicide bomber struck a funeral north of the Iraqi capital on Monday, killing at least 15 mourners, a government official said.

Interior Ministry spokesman Saad Maan told The Associated Press that the bomber blew himself up inside a funeral tent in a farming area outside the mainly Sunni town of Taji, about 22 kilometers (12 miles) north of Baghdad. He said another 26 mourners were wounded in the attack.

The funeral was for the father of two members of pro-government Sunni militias, known as Sahwa or Awakening Councils. The Sahwa militias began forming after the outbreak of Iraq's sectarian fighting in 2006, and allied with U.S. troops against al-Qaida in Iraq,

a precursor to the Islamic State extremist group. The government later took over the militias, integrating some members in the security forces and disbanding others.

Iraq hopes to revive the militias in order to fight the Islamic State group, which has exploited widespread Sunni discontent with the Shiite-led government. The extremist group seized much of northern and western Iraq over the summer, and also controls large swaths of neighboring Syria.

No one has claimed responsibility for Monday's attack in the Taji area, but it bore the hallmarks of the IS group, which frequently targets Sunnis allied with the Shiite-led government. (AP)

Israeli Troops Kill Palestinian Teen in West Bank



RAMALLAH - Israeli troops on Monday shot dead a Palestinian teenager in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus, witnesses said.

Israeli soldiers at Za'tara roadblock, south of Nablus, opened fire on a group of Palestinian teenagers, killing the 16-year-old boy, according to the witnesses.

Israeli Radio quoted the army as saying that a group of Palestinian teenagers were throwing stones at the roadblock when the soldiers opened fire.

The army added that one of the boys was injured and died later.

The boy's identity is still unknown, and his body is still in the hands of the Israeli army. The army said it has launched an investigation into the incident. (Xinhua)

Greece Must Commit to Europe, Back Reforms: EU



BRUSSELS - Greece must strongly commit to Europe and back growth-friendly reforms if it is to thrive again within the euro area, European Economic Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici said on Monday as the country headed for an early general election.

"Through this democratic process, the Greek people will once again decide on their future. A strong commitment to Europe and broad support among

the Greek voters and political leaders for the necessary growth-friendly reform process will be essential for Greece to thrive again within the euro area," he said in a statement. Earlier, Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras announced plans for an early general election next month after parliament rejected his candidate for president, throwing the country's international bailout into doubt. (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

2,006 Militants Killed in Zarb-E-Azb: Secretary Defence

ISLAMABAD - The Pakistani Secretary Defense on Monday has told the standing committee on defence of the National Assembly that as many as 2,006 terrorists have been killed in the Operation Zarb-e-Azb and the attack on school in Peshawar was the frustrated retaliation in response to the Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The in-camera meeting was held in the Parliament House Islamabad.

Secretary Defense Muhammad Alam and high-level authorities briefed the committee on the matter. The meeting was told that the Peshawar attack was done in response to the Operation

Zarb-e-Azb of the Pakistan Army. However, at least 199 soldiers including three officers have embraced martyrdom in different encounters with militants. Majority of the area has been cleared of insurgents. Moreover, more than one lac security forces personnel have been deployed in the area. While talking to the media after the meeting, committee chairman Sheikh Rohail Asghar said that the committee members would visit Line of Control (LoC), Waziristan, Siachin, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps and Army Public School (APS) Peshawar. (Agencies)

Iran Calls for Sending Human Rights Rapporteurs to US, Britain, Canada

TEHRAN - Iran asked the international human rights bodies to dispatch special rapporteurs to the US, Britain and Canada to investigate the dire situation of human rights in those countries.

"Unfortunately, human rights has turned into a political tool in the hands of a number of countries which claim to support human rights," Deputy Head of Iran's Human Rights Headquarters for International Affairs Kazem Qaribabadi told FNA on Monday.

Voicing regret about the extensive violation of human rights in the western states against minorities, Muslims and immigrants, he said the world is now witnessing the violation of human rights in Canada against the natives, in the US against the blacks and in Britain

which has strenuously lobbied to omit its name from the recent US Senate report on the CIA's interrogation and detention programs.

"Why the US, Canada and Britain don't allow a special rapporteur to compile a report on their human rights situation?" Qaribabadi asked.

In relevant remarks earlier this month, Head of the International Human Rights Center in Iran Ahmad Esfandiari said his center had sent a letter to the UN to dispatch independent rapporteurs to the US to investigate the numerous human rights violations in the country.

"We have sent a letter to the UN to ask them to provide the ground for the presence of the center's independent human rights rapporteurs in the US," Esfandiari told FNA. (FNA)

Chinese President Stresses CPC's Leadership of Universities

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for efforts to enhance the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in universities and improve Party building there.

Xi made the remarks in an instruction to a two-day national meeting on Party building in higher learning institutions which was concluded on Monday.

"Enhancing CPC leadership and Party building in the higher learning institutions is a fundamental guarantee for running socialist universities with Chinese features well," he said.

Xi said the higher-learning institutions shoulder the important tasks of studying, researching and publicizing Marxism, as well as training

builders and successors of the socialist cause with Chinese characteristics.

The core socialist values should be incorporated into the whole teaching process while ideological guidance should be enhanced to ensure the leadership in the universities' ideological work, he added.

Efforts should be made to stick to and improve the president responsibility system under the leadership of Party committee, Xi said.

According to a circular released by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee in October, the system is a power matrix in which presidents and other administrative officials accept and implement decisions made by Party committees. (Xinhua)

Rahmon's Pseudo-Friends Interested in Instability on the Border: Kyrgyz President

DUSHANBE - During a meeting with journalists in Bishkek, Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev said that the situation on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border began to stabilize after his meeting with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon. Vecherny Bishkek reports.

"After our meeting with President Rahmon in September in Dushanbe, practically all items were deleted from the agenda," Kyrgyz leader noted. Atambayev reportedly expressed confidence that the situation

on the border will continue to improve in the future as well. "I think we will solve all disputable issues when our neighbors will understand that there ought to talk to Kyrgyzstan as an equal. I am sure that Tajik president understood that. However, there are certain forces that are interested in conflicts on the border. The President of Tajikistan is not interested in that, but some his pseudo-friends are interested in that," Atambayev was quoted as saying. (Asia-Plus)